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DATE 2/18/13 479  
**Department of Public Health and Human Services**

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Testimony in support of House Bill 479: AN ACT ALLOWING RELEASE OF A PATIENT'S IMMUNIZATION RECORDS WITHOUT THE PATIENT'S CONSENT FOR USE IN RELATION TO THE STATE IMMUNIZATION INFORMATION SYSTEM; ALLOWING A PATIENT TO OPT OUT OF DISCLOSURE OF THE INFORMATION; AND AMENDING SECTIONS 50-16-530, 50-16-603, 50-16-605, AND 50-16-805, MCA.

Presented to the House Human Services Committee, Monday, February 18, 2013

On behalf of the Department, I am here to express our support for House Bill 479.

Montana's secure Immunization Information System (IIS), known as *imMTrax*, is relied upon by parents, health care providers and public health agencies to help ensure children and adults are vaccinated against once common diseases.

Systems like *imMTrax* are in place in every state and:

- Allow health care providers to see what vaccines a person may have received from *other* health providers- helping keep your vaccinations on schedule as well as preventing individuals from receiving unnecessary shots when records are unavailable.
- Provide a convenient place to obtain a copy of your record, or that of your child, when needed for travel, daycare or school attendance,
- Document important medical contraindications such as allergies that need to be discussed prior to receipt of certain vaccines, and
- Allow public health agencies to monitor vaccination efforts and to assist with our efforts to prevent further illnesses during an outbreak.

In 2010, we successfully upgraded our IIS. However, Montana is one of only three states that requires someone receiving a vaccine to "opt-in" to the state IIS. HB 479 would allow Montana's IIS to operate like those in 40 other states and provide an "opt-out" model. Our current approach is resource intensive and as the nation moves toward electronic transfer of this information is not always compatible with other medical information systems.

Opt-out models like that proposed by HB 479 offer more convenience for parents, providers and health authorities saving money and time. Instead of documenting the approximately 97% of individuals who choose to be in the registry public health agencies will instead document the 3% that opt-out. No information on anyone opting out will be retained in the IIS. For those not opting out, this bill allows sharing of information *only* with those who require this information- health care providers, schools, childcare facilities and public health agencies. Passage of HB 479 is in the interest of the consumer, provider and public health.

DPHHS thanks the providers and sponsor who are bringing this issue forward and I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have regarding this bill.